

## Conversation with 50 year old white male, West Virginia (Transcription)

M8A (4)

FW. OK. When you were a child did your parents have special things they did for you when you were sick or did you go to the doctor every time you got sick. Do you know any old remedies?

I. Back then, a dollar was a dollar, And the only time you went to the doctor is if, when you went to the doctor you was sick, you didn't go to the doctor for just a headache like now, Lotta people now if they've got just a little headache they ready to go to the doctor. Well back then, if, well, let's say you had a little headache or somethin, or mabe a bone a-hurtin, or your leg a-hurtin', mother would get up some kind of like sasafrac tea.

FW. Did she make that herself?

I. Oh, yeah. And we used to go out and dig the roots and then mother would boil it and get the juice off it, that be sassafrac tea.

FW. Ok. was there any, you just boiled it that's all and then you drank it.

I. You'd boil it and you drank it That's what we called sasafac tea.

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FW. Did that help you?

I. Oh well, it might not a helped you but you thought it did anyway as a kid an uh,

30-14

I. ...in that way.

FW. And that was for...well if you just....

I. Well, if you had a headache or somethin' like that, And then they was aw, they was I can't recall what kind of weeds it was, but you get a lotta different kinda weeds in a er, not weeds, it was roots and stuff, and mix it together, that, say it was kinda like a linament, somethin similar, <to?> old time linment that you could rub on you, say, for that, for leg pains or you know if you had a pain or somethin' like that.

FW. Did you ever hear of a-is it a poultice, is that, poltice did you ever hear of any of that where they cook the onions and mustard.?

I. Oh well no I don't believe I've, I know, now the mustard is a good, let's see what was it that they'd use. Oh, the mustard was used for, let's see, I just can't remember that now off hand.

FW. OK. Did you used-did you mother use any whiskey?

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I. Any Whiskey? Yeah well, moonshine, that was about all th <gap> But you know back then you could take ginger, put a little bit of ginger in it, and let's say if you took the flu in the fall of the year and say got pneumonia or somethin like that instead of goin to the doctor you could take a say half a glass of that and put ginger in it and take hit and go to bed and it'd sweat it right out of you.

FW. Did it make you high?

I. Make you a little bit high, sometimes you'd get a little <gap> high, I mean, lotsa times that's what mother and dad used, <gap> old time doctorin' and of course the old time doctors, country doctors, of course they would recommend that a lotta times to ya.

FW. The moonshine.

I. Oh yeah, well they'd reccomend whiskey, and that's about

30-15

I. the only thing that was goin' then, and that's what we used.

FW. Do you remember what they used for a tooth ache? Did they have anything special they'd...

I. Take a chew, take <tobaccos?> take a chew o tobacco and hold it on it or you could take...

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FW. Did the women do that too? for the toothache?

I. Oh yeah, you could take it and hold it in your mouth for a while or you could take whiskey and hold it on the tooth, Just get your mouth full o just raw whiskey and hold it in your mouth a-while and that was good. And if the tooth was loose, if you had a loose tooth, you'd just tie a string around it, you know, instead o goin' to the dentist and tie it to the door knob and then slam the door to, And that always tookk care of it.

FW. Did you ever have any teeth pulled this way? Did it hurt

I. Oh, just about all of them when I was a kid. Oh it might hurt a little bit for a second or two but it was over with, You just get you a good stout string, tie it around the tooth real good and let your brother or sister slam the door see. And that took care o that.

FW. You all must have been a little bit braver, than children are now. Your mother do anything special for you if you had the measles or the mumps? Do you remember any of these old remedies?

I. Well, if you had the mumps she didn't want you jumpin' around, oh they say that they'd always fall on ya that's the old time sayin' that the mumps would fall, and ah the measles then let's see they lasted, I believe, six weeks or somethin' like that, I'd say.

FW. Did she put anything special, make up anything to rub on?

I. Umm,. I don't, Yeah she made somethin but I can't recall.

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FW. You don't remember any of her remedies?

I. No, I can't recall what... I just don't know.

30-16

FW. Ok. You spoke of the moonshine did the, how did you get your moonshine whiskey?

I. Well, they was always somebody around within a few mile that knowed the remedy on makin' it. Well, when they made it you could always get it, they, If you didn't have the money to get it, if ah, you'd always probably know the guy and he'd always give you what you needed.

FW. Were you afraid ever to drink any of it?

I. No, unh uhn.

FW. Fraid it'd kill ya?

I. No, it was, you'd always, they'd always make it out of the stuff that they should make it out of, corn and all that.

FW. Do you know, did you ever see anyone make any moonshine?

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I: Well, you take corn and mash, like ah, well it's a, the mash is more of a corn-like, And you let it sour and then when it's, comes to a sour then you got your, what they call a worm and it's a like a coil and ah then this here whiskey, to make the whiskey, you get this fire hot and when this is comin' through the coil then it drops off, it makes steam, and when it drops off, as it drops off that's your whiskey.

FW. And that's all there is to makin' moonshine?

I. That's it.....well see it takes, uh... it takes six weeks or two months to make a run, See, you have to let your mash, hit has to get pickle-like, well it wouldbe called more of a pickle I guess. And then after hit gets ready, the mash gets ready, then you got to build your fire, you got your worm ready, you got to put yeast in it to make it work. And you can drop your yeast in it and that starts that mash to work, and that gets it up in ta (a-) workin' and then when you put the heat to it, and then it goes through the worm, what they

30-17

I. call the worm and when it does that, that makes your whiskey.

FW. And you, it jst has to drip out? And that's slow?

I. Yeah, yeah and you got to have sugar to see to put with it...

FW. Do you put that with it after it drips out?

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I. No you put all that in your mash and as it comes out then, and ah if somebody that has made a lota whiskey and knows exatly what to do to it, they know what, they would call good whiskey.

FW. OK. Did you ever get any bad whiskey?

I. No, well I never did, we never did, just used it for medicine and that way, and I drank some, not too much, just a little bit, you know, when I was younger, but I don't know as any that we ever got. We might have got a hold of some that didn't taste as good as the other.

FW. Doesn't it burn a whole lot?

I. Well, it burns pretty, pretty much but if you get used to it, I mean people just I don't know, I can't understand now though why the people would want to drink it myself, because I can't see no good in it. Of course if you would use the whiskey as a medicine I would say, I don't see no wrong in it. If you would really do it But they's so many people that won't do it. They want to drink it. They think they get a big kick out of it, but really there's no kick out of it. Ah, eh a lota people drink it and say they'll drink their troubles away. But just as soon as you wake up the next morning, your troubles is there plus a big headache too. So you've not gained anything.

FW. That's right. OK. Did ah, when your mother had her babies were they born at home or the hospital? Do you remember any of this?

I. Oh, well all of us was born home, because ah well we had what

30-18

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I. they call the country doctors and they was always on the call ready to come, You could get em word and they would come to the house. They was always ready, NOw, you can't get a doctor to come to the house now. They don't know if you, a house call that would be the biggest sin a doctor ever done, he thought. But back then, women very seldom ever went to the hospital to have a baby, you never hearda that, nothin' but well to do people. And ah,...all of my sisters and brothers we was all born at home.

FW. OK. what about your wife. Were your children born at home or the hospital?

I. Well, one, one was born at home, William he was borned at the house, and Mike was born in the hospital. And ah of course, they all had Evelyn scared to death bout goin' to the hospital, tellin' her these, big wild tales and all this stuff and that. Of course it was good experience that ah Bill was bornd, that's the first one, that's good experience that he was bornd at home, because it was a good experience to me...

FW. Were you were there?

I. Oh yeah.

FW. OK. Did you help out any?

I. Oh. ask Evelyn some time, I don't know if she can remember that, But I never will forget, ah I guess I was in as much pain just about as she was, maybe, I don't know. But anyway, my motherin law was there and I took her. Do you wan to hear all this? (FW."Yes") Anyway I took her to this doctor Young. I never will forget, he was a awful good ole country doctor and ah he was really good and a good man too. And ah, so I took him to her for the



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last check-up and so when we got there at the last checkup, he told me, he said now you take her back home and put her in the bed because, says you('ll) be callin'

30-19

I. tonight before and says you'll be callin' me tonight before, before mornin'; Said, in other words, said you'll be callin' me and says ah get her home and let her get all the rest she can get, So I go and I get my mother in law to come to help me, because I knowed that I would have a big time, I mean, by myself. So there my mother-in-law comes and so sure enough I had to carry her from the road, we lived 'bout 500 foot or a thousand foot off the road and I had the awfulest time in the world, carryin' her down on the hill, he done give her some medicine that put her to sleep. And So there I am draggin; tryin' to carry her down on the hill, And so I got her home and about oh two o'clock in the morning, here I go get the doctor, so then when the doctor got there, we got everything ready, We didn't have no bathroom. All we had was just the water outside the house. We got the washpans and, we got everything ready. So after a while, about a hour, the baby was born. An' so the doctor retch us, retch me the baby, I tuck took him tuck tucked Bill in and laid him down on the .....

FW. Right after he was born? First thing?

I. Oh yeah. it was pretty rough. And ah the doctor, when he retch him to us though, he had to, back in them days, the women now don't know what a recievin' blanket is, I'm sure. These young girls don't know what it is. But back then you had what they call a receivin' blanket. When the baby was first born, the doctor put him in that blanket and then you tuck him and then the doctor, of course, he was with Evelyn, and when he ah, when the baby was born, then he took him and spanked him on the butt, retch him to me....

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FW. Did he have him in the blanket when you got him?

I. Oh yeah. But he'd done spanked him and him a-squawlerin' ya know.....

30-20

FW. Had he cleaned him up?

I. Cleaned him up? yeah. I cleaned him up, me and my mother-in-law, ohoh it was, Hit looked pretty rough then, anyway I said Lawd Lawd what is this? And ah, so we tuck him in on the table, we had, just had a small house then. We took him in laid him down on the table and had the hot water ready, the baby soap, we got the rags my mother-in-law she already knowed the ropes on how to go about it. So We washed him, wiped him off real good, Well an after, we got him cleaned off really good, he, the skin was real white you know and him a-crying, an' we thought it was the only thing in the world and we was really happy. Well but then I checked it. I was checkin' on Evelyn every few minutes to see if she was all right. So in two hours, the doctor was gone, the baby was delivered, the doctor was gone.

FW. Did you watch the delivery, did you see any of that? Watch him <unintelligible text> born?

I. Yeah, why Sure I held her hand. (FW."You did?") I held her arm. Well...

FW. It must have been an awful experience for you? wasn't it?

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I. Well, they was nobody there but the doctor and me and my mother-in-lawy. And ah I wanted to be there. I wanted to be with her. And so when the baby was bein borned, the doctor told me I'd have to hold her, so I had to hold her, and ah.

FW. Did it scare you?

I. No, well, when it's time, it's just a matter of minutes, the baby's born. Because that's just like anything else, when it's time, it's time. It's goin to be delivered one way or another. And so the doctor was right there to see that the baby wadn't backward or somethin like that. If the baby is comin' backward, see, they got to take it through the side, did you know that?

FW. No.

30-21

I. Ya see if the baby don't come right the right way, if the doctor, say, that the baby is turned, the doctor, that's the reason you have to have a side operation, to take it out your side. Now if he can get to it in time sometimes the doctor can turn the baby. But if he can't, if the baby is comin' butt first, is that all right to say? If hit's comin' that way, see, if it's comin' out that way you can't have it.

FW. Did she have any trouble? like that, she had normal delivery.

I. Normal birth. Well ean', because see say if it would be doubled up and a-comin' butt first, they's no way you could have it. It's got to come out head first.

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FW. Yeah, somethin' could be wrond with it...

I. And they's so many times, And then, that's one good thing about the hospitals now, about babies being born in the hospital. If somethin' like that does occur, they're ready and got the stuff to operate right then and save the baby. Back in them days, of course, if it would be such a thing as that, a lota times, ah, it would either maybe kill the mother, sometimes it would kill her and the doctors didn't have the tools to operate there in the house. Most of the old doctors like that they just didn't have the stuff like they have in the hospital. Well ah, it woulda mabe killed the mother before you could get her to the hospital.

FW. And a lot of babies died too didn't they?

I. A lota the babies died, yeah. they was lots of 'em died. Like there either mabe the baby would get hurt, say, that was called, back in them days, maybe a lotta the babies their head or maybe a eye or somethin', That was caused from that maybe.

FW. Then, she had the second baby in the hospital, right?

I. Oh yeah.

FW. Do you think that's best?